

COVID-19 Patient Q&A

March 26



Advice on Social Distancing, Social Isolation and Shielding

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Q. Why should I stay at home?

Everyone must stay at home to help stop the spread of coronavirus.

You should only leave the house for 1 of 4 reasons:

- shopping for basic necessities, for example food and medicine, which must be as infrequent as possible
- one form of exercise a day, for example a run, walk, or cycle – alone or with members of your household
- any medical need, or to provide care or to help a vulnerable person
- travelling to and from work, but only where this absolutely cannot be done from home, please ask your employer

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Important

These 4 reasons are exceptions – even when doing these activities, you should be minimising time spent outside of the home and ensuring you are 2 metres apart from anyone outside of your household.

Q. What are the symptoms of the Coronavirus (COVID-19)?

- **a high temperature** – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)
- **a new, continuous cough** – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)

Q. I'm confused, what is the difference between Social Distancing, Social isolation and Shielding?

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Social Distancing	Self Isolation	Shielding
<p>Social distancing is everyone's responsibility and is particularly important to protect ourselves and those most vulnerable (see Page 6), and guidance on page 7.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social distancing measures are steps you can take to reduce social interaction between people. This will help reduce the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19). <p>Measures include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avoiding contact with someone who is displaying symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19). These symptoms include high temperature and/or new and continuous cough Stop non-essential travel and use of public transport Work from home, where possible to do so. Your employer should support you to do this. Please refer to employer guidance for more information. 	<p>You should self-isolate if you or any member of your household has symptoms of COVID-19 see page 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not leave your home if you have symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) or live with someone who does. this is called self-isolation. If you are self-isolating, you should not leave your home for any reason. Do not go out to buy food or collect medicine – order them by phone or online, or ask someone else to drop them off at your front door. Do not have visitors, such as friends and family, in your home. Sleep in separate rooms Use a separate bathroom where possible. Use a separate washing facilities and towel Double bag dirty washing and waste You can use your garden, if you have one. 	<p>People falling into this extremely vulnerable, high risk group as outlined on page 6:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You are strongly advised to stay at home and avoid any face-to-face contact for a period of at least 12 weeks The shielding measures are: Strictly avoid contact with someone who is displaying symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19). These symptoms include high temperature and/or new and continuous cough. Do not leave your house. Do not attend any gatherings. This includes gatherings of friends and families in private spaces, for example, family homes, weddings and religious services. Do not go out for shopping, leisure or travel and, when arranging food or medication deliveries, these should be left at the door to minimise contact.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avoid large and small gatherings in public spaces, noting that pubs, restaurants, leisure centres and similar venues are currently shut as infections spread easily in closed spaces where people gather together.• Avoid gatherings with friends and family. Keep in touch using remote technology such as phone, internet, and social media• Do not attend the GP Practice - telephone the GP Surgery for advice or online services to contact your GP or other essential services• Everyone should be trying to follow these measures as much as is practicable.• We strongly advise you to follow the guidance and stay at home.		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keep in touch using remote technology such as phone, internet, and social media.• Do use telephone or online services to contact your GP or other essential services.
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Q. My family member whom I live with is showing symptoms of COVID-19, what should we do as individuals and as a household?

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Individual with symptoms of COVID-19, a high temperature or a new, continuous cough	Household members living in the same accommodation as the person with symptoms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-isolate for 7 days from the first day they have symptoms • If they need medical help for any reason, do not go to places like a GP, pharmacy or hospital. • If they have symptoms of coronavirus, use the 111 coronavirus service https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19/ • If they do not have internet access call 111 for advice • Do not contact your GP for a medical certificate (sicknote) • You should self-certify for the first 7 days of absence from work • They must not leave your home for any reason, other than to exercise once a day – but stay at least 2 metres (3 steps) away from other people • They must not go out to buy food or collect medicine – order them by phone or online, or ask someone else to drop them off at your home • They must not have visitors, such as friends and family, in your home • They can use the household garden, if the household has one 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you live with someone who has symptoms, you'll need to self-isolate for 14 days from the day their symptoms started. This is because it can take 14 days for symptoms to appear. • If more than 1 person at home has symptoms, self-isolate for 14 days from the day the first person started having symptoms. • If you get symptoms, self-isolate for 7 days from when your symptoms start, even if it means you're self-isolating for longer than 14 days. • If you do not get symptoms, you can stop self-isolating after 14 days. • If you work, you should obtain a fit-note from https://111.nhs.uk/isolation-note • Whole household must not leave your home for any reason, other than to exercise once a day – but stay at least 2 metres (3 steps) away from other people • Whole household must not go out to buy food or collect medicine – order them by phone or online, or ask someone else to drop them off at your home • Whole household must not have visitors, such as friends and family, in your home • Whole household can use your garden, if you have one

Q. Who is classed as vulnerable and who is classed as high risk and what is the difference?

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Vulnerable People	High Risk
<p>Those who are at increased risk of severe illness from coronavirus (COVID-19) to be particularly stringent in following social distancing measures. Please see guidance on Page 7 and if you are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • aged 70 or older (regardless of medical conditions) • under 70 with an underlying health condition listed below (i.e. anyone instructed to get a flu jab as an adult each year on medical grounds): • chronic (long-term) respiratory diseases, such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), emphysema or bronchitis • chronic heart disease, such as heart failure • chronic kidney disease • chronic liver disease, such as hepatitis • chronic neurological conditions, such as Parkinson’s disease, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis (MS), a learning disability or cerebral palsy • diabetes • problems with your spleen – for example, sickle cell disease or if you have had your spleen removed • a weakened immune system as the result of conditions such as HIV and AIDS, or medicines such as steroid tablets or chemotherapy • being seriously overweight (a body mass index (BMI) of 40 or above) • those who are pregnant 	<p>Coronavirus can make anyone seriously ill, but there are some people who are at a higher risk, people on this list should the guidance for Shielding on Page 9</p> <p>For example, you may be at high risk from coronavirus if you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have had an organ transplant • are having certain types of cancer treatment • have blood or bone marrow cancer, such as leukaemia • have a severe lung condition, such as cystic fibrosis or severe asthma • have a condition that makes you much more likely to get infections • are taking medicine that weakens your immune system • are pregnant and have a serious heart condition • If you're at high risk, you will be contacted by the NHS by Monday 30 March 2020. Do not contact your GP or healthcare team at this stage – wait to be contacted. • You and any household members should following the guidance for Shielding on pg. 6

Q. My family member whom I live with is on the vulnerable list, what should the vulnerable individual and other household members do?

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Vulnerable Individual	Household members living in the same accommodation as a vulnerable person
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vulnerable people should ensure they follow stringent social distancing measures: • Avoid contact with someone who is displaying symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19). • Avoid non-essential use of public transport when possible • Work from home, where possible. Your employer should support you to do this. Please refer to employer guidance for more information, you do not need a fit note as you will be fit to work. Please contact your GP if you are unsure of your risk level. • Avoid large and small gatherings in public spaces, noting that pubs, restaurants, leisure centres and similar venues are currently shut as infections spread easily in closed spaces where people gather together. • Avoid gatherings with friends and family. Keep in touch using remote technology such as phone, internet, and social media • Use telephone or online services to contact your GP or other essential services • Everyone should be trying to follow these measures as much as is practicable. • We strongly advise you to follow the above measures as much as you can and to significantly limit your face-to-face interaction with friends and family if possible, particularly if you: 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You should follow normal social distancing measures • You <u>should only</u> leave the house for 1 of 4 reasons: • shopping for basic necessities, for example food and medicine, which must be as infrequent as possible • one form of exercise a day, for example a run, walk, or cycle – alone or with members of your household • any medical need, or to provide care or to help a vulnerable person • travelling to and from work, but only where this absolutely cannot be done from home, please ask you employer, you do not need a fit note as you will be fit to work. • Important • These 4 reasons are exceptions – even when doing these activities, you should be minimising time spent outside of the home and ensuring you are 2 metres apart from anyone outside or inside of your household. • avoid using shared spaces at home, such as kitchens or bathrooms, at the same time as the vulnerable household member • open windows in shared spaces if you can • clean a shared bathroom each time you use it, for example by wiping the surfaces you have touched • use a dishwasher if you have one – if you do not have one, use washing-up liquid and warm water and dry everything thoroughly

- are over 70
- have an underlying health condition
- are pregnant
- This advice is likely to be in place for some weeks
- try to keep 2 metres (3 steps) away from each other
- avoid using shared spaces, such as kitchens or bathrooms, at the same time as each other
- open windows in shared spaces if you can
- clean a shared bathroom each time you use it, for example by wiping the surfaces you have touched
- use a dishwasher if you have one – if you do not have one, use washing-up liquid and warm water and dry everything thoroughly
- do not share a bed, if possible
- do not share towels, including hand towels and tea towels

Q. My family member whom I live with is on the high risk list, what should the high-risk individual and other household members do?

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High-Risk Individual	Household members living in the same accommodation as a High-Risk person
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NHS England is directly contacting people who are at high-risk. • If you think you fall into one of the categories of extremely vulnerable people listed on page 4 above and you have not received a letter by 30 March 2020 or been contacted by your GP, you should discuss your concerns with your GP or hospital clinician. • You are strongly advised to stay at home at all times and avoid any face-to-face contact for a period of at least 12 weeks from the day you receive your letter. Please note that this period of time could change. • Visits from people who provide essential support to you such as healthcare, personal support with your daily needs or social care should continue, but carers and care workers must stay away if they have any of the symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19). You may find this guidance on home care provision useful. All people coming to your home should wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds on arrival to your house and often while they are there. • You should have an alternative list of people who can help you with your care if your main carer becomes unwell. You can also contact your local council for advice on how to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Household members living with a high-risk person should ensure they follow stringent social distancing measures: • Avoid contact with someone who is displaying symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19). • Avoid non-essential use of public transport when possible • Work from home, where possible. Your employer should support you to do this. You do not need a fit note as you will be fit to work. • Avoid large and small gatherings in public spaces, noting that pubs, restaurants, leisure centres and similar venues are currently shut as infections spread easily in closed spaces where people gather together. • Avoid gatherings with friends and family. Keep in touch using remote technology such as phone, internet, and social media • Use telephone or online services to contact your GP or other essential services • Everyone should be trying to follow these measures as much as is practicable. • We strongly advise you to follow the above measures as much as you can and to significantly limit your face-to-face interaction with friends and family if possible • try to keep 2 metres (3 steps) away from each other

access care.

- The measures are:
- Strictly avoid contact with someone who is displaying symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19). These symptoms include high temperature and/or new and continuous cough.
- Do not attend any gatherings. This includes gatherings of friends and families in private spaces, for example, family homes, weddings and religious services.
- Do not go out for shopping, leisure or travel and, when arranging food or medication deliveries, these should be left at the door to minimise contact.
- Keep in touch using remote technology such as phone, internet, and social media.
- Do use telephone or online services to contact your GP or other essential services.
- This advice is likely to be in place for some weeks
- try to keep 2 metres (3 steps) away from each other
- avoid using shared spaces, such as kitchens or bathrooms, at the same time as each other
- open windows in shared spaces if you can
- clean a shared bathroom each time you use it, for example by wiping the surfaces you have touched
- use a dishwasher if you have one – if you do not have one, use washing-up liquid and warm water and dry everything thoroughly
- do not share a bed, if possible
- do not share towels, including hand towels and tea towels
- While the rest of your household are not required to adopt these protective shielding measures for themselves, we would expect them to do what they can to support you in shielding and to stringently follow guidance on social

- avoid using shared spaces, such as kitchens or bathrooms, at the same time as each other
- open windows in shared spaces if you can
- clean a shared bathroom each time you use it, for example by wiping the surfaces you have touched
- use a dishwasher if you have one – if you do not have one, use washing-up liquid and warm water and dry everything thoroughly
- do not share a bed, if possible
- do not share towels, including hand towels and tea towels

distancing.

- Minimise as much as possible the time other family members spend in shared spaces such as kitchens, bathrooms and sitting areas, and keep shared spaces well ventilated.
- Aim to keep 2 metres (3 steps) away from people you live with and encourage them to sleep in a different bed where possible. If you can, you should use a separate bathroom from the rest of the household. Make sure you use separate towels from the other people in your house, both for drying themselves after bathing or showering and for hand-hygiene purposes.
- If you do share a toilet and bathroom with others, it is important that they are cleaned after use every time (for example, wiping surfaces you have come into contact with). Another tip is to consider drawing up a rota for bathing, with you using the facilities first.
- If you share a kitchen with others, avoid using it while they are present. If you can, you should take your meals back to your room to eat. If you have one, use a dishwasher to clean and dry the family's used crockery and cutlery. If this is not possible, wash them using your usual washing up liquid and warm water and dry them thoroughly. If you are using your own utensils, remember to use a separate tea towel for drying these.
- We understand that it will be difficult for some people to separate themselves from others at home. You should do your very best to follow this guidance and everyone in your household should regularly wash their hands, avoid touching their face, and clean frequently touched surfaces.
- If the rest of your household stringently follow advice on

social distancing and minimise the risk of spreading the virus within the home by following the advice above, there is no need for them to also shield alongside you.

- Please discuss your daily needs during this period of staying at home with carers, family, friends, neighbours or local community groups to see how they can support you. Please visit [gov.uk/coronavirus-extremely-vulnerable](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-extremely-vulnerable) to register for the support that you need. This includes help with food, shopping deliveries and additional care you might need.

Other key Information

Q. What If I need a Prescription?

Please call your normal GP surgery and request a telephone consultation with the appropriate clinician. You will be asked by the reception or clinician to nominate a suitable pharmacy for your prescription to be sent electronically to.

Q. What if I need a Sick note?

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If you have suspected COVID-19	Household members living in the same accommodation as the person with symptoms	Vulnerable people	High Risk People
<p>You should stay at home for 7 days to isolate and not attend work. See guidance on page 5</p> <p>You do not need to contact your GP Surgery.</p> <p>Self-certification If employees are off work for 7 days or less, they do not need to give their employer a fit note or other proof of sickness from a medical professional.</p> <p>When they return to work, their employer can ask them to confirm</p>	<p>You should stay at home and isolate for 14 days from when your household member first displays symptoms. You should not attend work.</p> <p>You do not need to contact your GP surgery.</p> <p>You can obtain a fit-note for COVID-19 from https://111.nhs.uk/isolation-note/</p> <p>You can also download a cover letter from your surgery: https://www.commonwealthhealthcentre.nhs.uk/</p>	<p>You do not need to isolate, you should stringently follow social distancing.</p> <p>You are fit to work, and your employer should try to make arrangements for you to work from home where possible.</p> <p>You do not need a sick note.</p>	<p>NHS England is directly contacting people who are at high-risk.</p> <p>If you think you fall into one of the categories of extremely vulnerable people listed on page 4 above and you have not received a letter by 30 March 2020 or been contacted by your GP, you should discuss your concerns with your GP or hospital clinician.</p> <p>You are strongly advised to stay at home at all times and</p>

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<p>they've been off sick. This is called 'self-certification'. The employer and employee will agree on how the employee should do this.</p> <p>Alternatively, you can complete the SC2 form to claim SSP from your employer: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-sick-pay-employees-statement-of-sickness-sc2</p> <p>Your employer should accept a self-certificate, however, if for any reason they do not, you can obtain a fit-note for COVID-19 from https://111.nhs.uk/isolation-note/</p> <p>You can also download a cover letter from your surgery: https://www.commonwealthhealthcentre.nhs.uk/</p>			<p>avoid any face-to-face contact for a period of at least 12 weeks from the day you receive your letter.</p> <p>You should show your employer your letter.</p> <p>You can also download a cover letter from your surgery: https://www.commonwealthhealthcentre.nhs.uk/</p>
		<p>Household members living in the same accommodation as a vulnerable person</p>	<p>Household members living in the same accommodation as a High Risk person</p>
		<p>You do not need to isolate, you should social distance, you are able to go to work. You are fit to work.</p> <p>You do not need a sick note</p>	<p>You do not need to isolate, you should stringently follow social distancing.</p> <p>You are fit to work, and your employer should try to make arrangements for you to work from home where possible.</p> <p>You do not need a sick note</p>

Q. What if I need a letter for my employer?

You can also download a cover letter from your surgery: <https://www.commonwealthhealthcentre.nhs.uk/>

Q. I just feel unwell - and its not COVID-19 what do I do?

Please contact your GP Surgery for a telephone consultation for further advice.

Q. What about a rescue pack?

There has been an unhelpful and misleading message being widely spread on social media advising people with respiratory conditions including asthma and COPD to seek “rescue medication” from their GP.

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Please DO NOT ask your GP for ‘rescue medication’ if you don’t usually have standby medication for your respiratory condition. The original post was taken down. It was posted in good faith but is potentially dangerous and is certainly unhelpful.

British Lung Foundation’s response

“We’ve been made aware of some posts on social media saying that if you have a lung condition, your GP will issue a rescue pack of steroids and antibiotics.

If you're normally advised to have a rescue pack available to treat your lung condition then it's a good idea to check you have one. This is recommended for some with COPD to be used as part of a personalised plan. For people with asthma, we do not recommend these as standard.

If someone’s asthma is bad enough to consider steroids it is essential they are assessed by a health care professional. Even at this busy time for the NHS, getting early support for any problems with your lungs is critical to keep you well and out of hospital.”

Along similar lines, please do not stockpile inhalers. If you haven’t needed one for many years don’t ask for one now. We are seeing increasing supply issues due to over-ordering. Please be patient with your community pharmacist, they are doing the best they can in difficult circumstances.

Q. What other measures can we all undertake to stay safe?

Handwashing and respiratory hygiene

There are general principles you can follow to help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses, including:

- washing your hands more often - with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use a hand sanitiser when you get home or into work, when you blow your nose, sneeze or cough, eat or handle food
- avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
- avoid close contact with people who have symptoms
- cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in a bin and wash your hands
- clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces in the home

What should you do if you have hospital and GP appointments during this period?

We advise everyone to access medical assistance remotely, wherever possible. However, if you have a scheduled hospital or other medical appointment during this period, talk to your GP or clinician to ensure you continue to receive the care you need and consider whether appointments can be postponed.

Looking after your mental wellbeing

Understandably, you may find that social distancing can be boring or frustrating. You may find your mood and feelings are affected and you may feel low, worried or have problems sleeping and you might miss being outside with other people.

At times like these, it can be easy to fall into unhealthy patterns of behaviour which in turn can make you feel worse. There are simple things you can do that may help, to stay mentally and physically active during this time such as:

- look for ideas of exercises you can do at home on the [NHS website](#)
- spend time doing things you enjoy – this might include reading, cooking, other indoor hobbies or listening to the radio or watching TV programmes
- try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, drink enough water and try to avoid smoking, alcohol and drugs
- keep your windows open to let in fresh air, get some natural sunlight if you can, or get outside into the garden
- You can also go for a walk or exercise outdoors if you stay more than 2 metres from others.



What steps can you take to stay connected with family and friends during this time?

Draw on support you might have through your friends, family and other networks during this time. Try to stay in touch with those around you over the phone, by post, or online. Let people know how you would like to stay in touch and build that into your routine. This is also important in looking after your mental wellbeing and you may find it helpful to talk to them about how you are feeling. Remember it is OK to share your concerns with others you trust and in doing so you may end up providing support to them too.